

No. 46765-8-II

COURT OF APPEALS, DIVISION II
OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

STATE OF WASHINGTON,

Respondent,

vs.

Phyllis Holman,

Appellant.

Cowlitz County Superior Court Cause No. 14-1-00339-8

The Honorable Judge Michael Evans

Appellant's Supplemental Brief

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ISSUES AND ASSIGNMENT OF ERROR

1. The court erred by ordering Ms. Holman to pay \$2275 in legal financial obligations absent any inquiry into whether she had the means to do so.
2. The court erred by entering finding of fact 2.5. CP 24.

ISSUE 1: A court may not order a person to pay legal financial obligations (LFOs) without conducting an individualized inquiry into his/her means to do so. Did the court err by ordering Ms. Holman to pay \$2275 in LFOs while also finding her indigent and without analyzing whether she had the money to pay?

STATEMENT OF FACTS AND PRIOR PROCEEDINGS

At sentencing, the court did not conduct any inquiry into Phyllis Holman's financial situation. RP 164-175.

Still, the court ordered her to pay \$2275 in legal financial obligations. CP 25. The court also found Ms. Holman indigent for purposes of appeal. CP 45-47.

Ms. Holman timely appealed. CP 33-44.

ARGUMENT

THE TRIAL COURT ERRED BY ORDERING MS. HOLMAN TO PAY \$2275 IN LEGAL FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS WITHOUT INQUIRING INTO HER ABILITY TO PAY.

Ms. Holman was found indigent at the end of trial. CP 45-47. Still, the court ordered her to pay \$2275 in legal financial obligations (LFOs). CP 25.

The court appeared to rely on boilerplate language in the Judgment and Sentence stating, essentially, that every offender has the ability to pay LFOs. CP 24. But the court did not conduct any particularized inquiry into Ms. Holman's financial situation at sentencing or at any other time. RP 164-175. The court erred by ordering Ms. Holman to pay LFOs absent any indication that she had the means to do so.

The legislature has mandated that “[t]he court *shall not* order a defendant to pay costs unless the defendant is or will be able to pay them.” RCW 10.01.160(3); *State v. Blazina*, 182 Wn.2d 827, 841, 344 P.3d 680 (2015) (emphasis added by court).

This imperative language prohibits a trial court from ordering LFOs absent an individualized inquiry into the person’s ability to pay. *Id.* Boilerplate language in the Judgment and Sentence is inadequate because it does not demonstrate that the court engaged in an individualized analysis. *Id.*

The court must consider personal factors such as incarceration, the person’s other debts (including restitution), and the receipt of means-tested benefits. *Id.*

Here, the court failed to conduct any meaningful inquiry into Ms. Holman’s ability to pay LFOs. RP 164-175. The court did not consider her financial status in any way. Indeed, the court also found Ms. Holman indigent at the end of the proceeding. RP 45-47.

The *Blazina* court suggested that an indigent person would likely never be able to pay LFOs. *Id.* at 839 (“[I]f someone does meet the GR 34 standard for indigency, courts should seriously question that person’s ability to pay LFOs”). Ms. Holman was determined to be indigent at both the beginning and the end of the proceedings in trial court. CP 45-46.

RAP 2.5(a) permits an appellate court to review errors even when they are not raised in the trial court. RAP 2.5(a); *Blazina*, 182 Wn.2d at 835. The *Blazina* court recently chose to review the LFO-related issue raised in this case, finding that “National and local cries for reform of broken LFO systems demand that this court exercise its RAP 2.5(a) discretion and reach the merits of this case.” *Id.*

The Supreme Court noted the significant disparities both nationally and in Washington in the administration of LFOs and the significant barriers they place to reentry of society. *Id.* at 835-36. This court should follow the Supreme Court’s lead and consider the merits of Ms. Holman’s LFO claim even though it was not raised below.

The court erred by ordering Ms. Holman to pay \$2275 in LFOs absent any showing that she had the means to do so. *Blazina*, 182 Wn.2d at 841. The order must be vacated and the case remanded for a new sentencing hearing. *Id.*

CONCLUSION

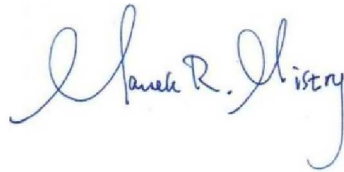
The court erred by ordering Ms. Holman to pay \$2275 in legal financial obligations without any inquiry into her means to do so. Ms. Holman’s case must be remanded for resentencing.

Respectfully submitted on June 30, 2015,

BACKLUND AND MISTRY

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jodi R. Backlund". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

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Attorney for the Appellant

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I certify that on today's date:

I mailed a copy of Appellant's Supplemental Brief, postage prepaid, to:

Phyllis Holman
546 17th Ave
Longview, WA 98632

With the permission of the recipient(s), I delivered an electronic version of the brief, using the Court's filing portal, to:

Cowlitz County Prosecuting Attorney
appeals@co.cowlitz.wa.us

I filed the Appellant's Supplemental Brief electronically with the Court of Appeals, Division II, through the Court's online filing system.

I CERTIFY UNDER PENALTY OF PERJURY UNDER THE LAWS OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON THAT THE FOREGOING IS TRUE AND CORRECT.

Signed at Olympia, Washington on June 30, 2015.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jodi R. Backlund". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jodi R. Backlund, WSBA No. 22917
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BACKLUND & MISTRY

June 30, 2015 - 11:28 AM

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